

# ARISTOCRACY

& the Meaning of Class Rule

¶ Aristocracy is here considered as an inherent principle in the structure of any society. ¶ The writer contends that the age of democracy is only a phase of social evolution and that the conception of democracy is inadequate to create or sustain a politico-social state. ¶ This theme is illustrated by extensive references to the movements of history and closes with a prospect of social renewal through an aristocratic movement, based upon a synthesis of all sciences and directed towards world-development and organisation.

5/-  
net

# ARISTOCRACY

AND THE MEANING  
OF CLASS RULE

An Essay upon Aristocracy  
Past and Future

By PHILIPPE MAIRET

First published: 1931



LONDON: THE C. W. DANIEL COMPANY  
Forty-six Bernard Street, W.C.1

MADE AND PRINTED  
IN GREAT BRITAIN

## CONTENTS

	PAGE
I THE FALL OF DEMOCRACY .. ..	7
II THE GENESIS OF CLASSES .. ..	23
III REGENERATION AND DECAY .. ..	45
IV THE RECOGNITION OF SOCIAL FUNCTION	61
V SCIENCE AND AXIOCRACY .. ..	83



## I. *The Fall of Democracy*

THE most brilliant epoch of Western civilisation—that which culminated with the Great War—was only made possible by the destruction of a rigid system of class-government. At the beginning of that age of progress, before the discoveries of science had yet invaded philosophy or revolutionised economics, the aristocracies of Western Europe were already in a damaged and decadent condition. They resisted their overthrow with divided forces and under incompetent leadership. Nevertheless they died hard. They were so tenacious of life that they were able, throughout the period in question, to obstruct the progress of the new order which they were never designed to direct, and not even the deluge of the greatest war in history has been able to obliterate the last vestiges of a class-government which was already in the days of Newton and Kepler a scarcely venerable ruin of the Feudal Aristocracy.

The strength of that ancient order, even in its decay, was not in any conspicuous degree due to

the morale of its ruling members. Nor is it wholly explainable by their grasp of material resources, the mere power of the *status quo*. It was defended by a complex of notions about society, ingrained in the education and in the thinking habits of the people. Men had certain ideas of what was possible and impossible in human relations. These ideas were not all identical, of course. They were fragmentary, and differing according to the place which individuals held in the system of their society. But, taken as a whole, we may say that men conceived their nation to be a more or less reasonable organization of different classes with explicit functions and powers. They knew quite well that in practice this idea worked badly and oppressively for many of them. But a social conception may be proof against much contrary experience. If things go badly, it is always more natural to ascribe evils to the wickedness of individuals than to the social order itself. For the social order is a big thing to understand. One gets along, as a rule, with a few rough directive notions about it, and it is distasteful to have to revise them.

In any case, the landed aristocracy was doomed to go down before the rising powers of finance and industry. But this political change would have

been very different from what it was but for the fact that the prevailing notion of the social heritage was at the same time disintegrated by the force of a new idea. That was the idea (or ideal) of Democracy. But for this idea, which the middle-class intelligentsia contributed to the struggle, it is probable that the agrarian aristocracy would merely have been dispossessed in civil war and the warped framework of Aristocracy refilled with new members. Bankers and manufacturers would have assumed dukedoms and baronies, and thrones would doubtless have been occupied at last by the most adventurous of company promoters. To a large extent, indeed, that is exactly what happened. The new rulers of industry often aspired to found ruling families; they bought lands and titles, and learned heralds provided them with patterns in argent, gules and or without any keen sense of the ridiculous. In fact, these things still happen. But the old honours have faded as fast as the new worthies could win them, and their political significance is fast approaching negligibility. There are parvenu peers who are very powerful, but not because of their peerage. Not even the most conservative party in our House of Commons, for instance, can assemble any enthusiasm for reconstituting the House of Lords

or extending its very limited powers. The idea of Democracy, by changing the whole form and meaning of politics, has at least prevented the new powers from ruling under the old titles.

The purpose of this essay is to forecast the function of Aristocracy in the society of the future. But before attempting to do so it is advisable, with the least possible digression into political theory or history, to estimate this idea of Democracy and what it has done in the last century and a half.

In a sense, it has done everything: it has achieved its aims, and we might say that Democracy is here. If one of the first heralds of the age of Democracy—a Tom Paine or a Godwin—could return to see the progress of his ideas, he would at first be gratified by their almost total realization. For, apart from the millennial hopes of human brotherhood and general well-being which are not peculiar to any special political conception, the proposals of the early Democrats were of a very definite character. Government by a single national assembly, paid, and elected by all the adult citizens of the State without any distinction of class or creed or sex or property—this has at last been formally achieved in England: and this is quite as much as most Democrats considered needful for political salvation.

And yet, under this political constitution which he had prophesied as perfect, the resurrected Democrat would be amazed to find that class-distinction and class-antipathies remain as rank as ever. He would hear the "capitalist classes," "middle classes" and "working classes" or "proletariat" mentioned as grades of well-being, yes, and even of political power. He would find the wages of most of the workers limited by an index-figure of the "cost of living," and thousands of them living without work upon a meagre State-allowance. He would find men wealthier than his world ever knew, wielding power over the fortunes of thousands. All this would certainly cool the ardour he had felt when the star of Democracy was sung into our skies by so many poets and idealist thinkers.

It is true that Democracy, as it was conceived by its greatest advocates, has never been tried. Representative government is only a pseudo-democratic system of which Rousseau exposed the weaknesses before the French Revolution, when he pointed out that even the English were free only at elections, and that even then their sovereignty was limited to the right of abdicating it in favour of one of two politicians. But the fact remains that at the same time as our political

methods have moved far in the direction Democracy indicated, a new social order has established itself, upon a basis which all the early Democrats would have detested. They were opposed to the rule of classes. But the rising classes of the Industrial Democratic age often fought under their flag only to hasten the expulsion of the old order and establish themselves in its place. Any principle which in practice thus produces the opposite of what it intends must be at least suspected of an error in its conception. And it is not very difficult to detect the error which is involved in the theory of Democracy.

Democracy is essentially a theory of the State. The State is an idea of power, of a power which rules Society. Of course it is Society's own power, but considered in its aspect of ruling. Rousseau based it, therefore, upon the idea of a *General Will*, and in his time it was a great advance in political thinking to do so. This General Will is the central conception of the "Contrat Social," and the foundation-stone of Democratic theory. It was necessary, if sociology was to progress with the modern scientific movement in general, now to understand Society as a natural, and no longer as a supernatural, phenomenon. In Rousseau's view the State was not a dependency of Heaven.

Rather was it a superstructure of man's life on earth. Man's own sense of the common good created a general will to realise that good in the State. Not that the State was a thing apart from its members. It existed in them and through them, but their general will as a community was distinct from any of their private wills, a reality over and above all, although all participated in it.

Towards this State, then, a man stood in a twofold relation. He was both its citizen (*i.e.*, its constituent and creator) and its subject. But this relation of individual to State was so very general a generalization that it was restricted in direct application. Direct relation between the general will and all individual cases is most visible, of course, in the sphere of law. All men are equal before the law. Naturally, then, the work of Rousseau, and the entire movement of political thought with which he was associated, tended to develop into a legal aspect of Society, practically ignoring its economic and cultural organization. This fact is exemplified in the concrete contributions to social evolution which Rousseau's school of thought has made. For the Code Napoleon and the Constitution of the States of America were the greatest systems which it directly inspired.



The revolutionary naturalism of this view was often associated with atheism. But people did not notice that the God who was being cast out of heaven was coming to life again in a notion of the State so ideal and abstract as to be theological. The General Will, as Rousseau taught us to conceive it, is a notion of such an absolute character that we can only enter into its pure essentiality by leaving all real problems outside it. Rousseau himself doubted whether a Democracy ever had existed or could exist in the future, but only said that a society of gods would certainly govern itself democratically. It is not much comfort to know that in a pure and metaphysical State we can all realise Liberty, Equality and Fraternity in a pure and metaphysical manner. Our problem is this practical one—how to organize the common tasks of life. And let us consider what would happen if Rousseau's ideal could be realised, that is, if all the adult citizens of the State could meet in a single council, not by representatives, but in person, to consider an urgent problem such as the price of corn.

At once we find ourselves outside the realm of realities. The millions assembled could not possibly join in the debate unless Heaven fed them with manna gratis, and if the discussion was left to a

few with expert knowledge the presence of the others would still be a ruinous waste of time. There is no question conceivable which might be raised in such a universal assembly upon which the General Will could be correctly estimated, unless it were an adjournment for refreshment, in which case the spontaneity of the response would doubtless be notable. Yet this inherently impossible congregation, which at the very best could only drink its own health, sing a hymn of praise to the pure General Will, or perform some such strictly symbolical rite\* has been implicitly regarded, throughout the age of Democracy, as the ideal of legislative and even of executive assembly, instead of its obvious *reductio ad absurdum*.

In practice, of course, men are always wiser than their theories, but the effect of this notion of a General Will was to make men think that they were approaching the nearer to political perfection the more they could delegate actual responsibilities to a single central State-parliament—which was to be modelled as nearly as possible

\*I am far from minimising the importance or value of meetings which are purely symbolical or expressive of unity. Indeed, the real value of the idea of Democracy has not been its effect upon political machinery, but its power to evoke social feeling. It was this which produced the real Democratic advances in justice, personal liberty and public spirit.

upon the fantastic assembly we have been contemplating. They forgot more and more that the General Will itself is an abstraction; that, by definition, its nature is such that it can have no *particular* knowledge and no *special* intentions. If there is a real General Will it can only exist in the social functioning of every part of society. There is literally nothing for it to do in the ideal vacuum of "the State." It is no wonder, then, that while men's political energies were directed towards the attainment of this ideal vacuum, the power of decision in affairs was left to more realistic endeavours, and the social order slid down into a plutocracy.

The failure of Democracy to prevent new inequalities has weakened the force of its idea, which now survives by inertia and because it has a certain emotional value. Its intellectual prestige is ruined already; and the ruling forces in present political thought are opposed to Democracy.

These forces may be said to have originated, from two opposite poles of conception, with Nietzsche and Karl Marx. Nietzsche divined the Will to Power of individuals in the formation of every society, and his views have been heavily reinforced by the findings of recent psychologists. Marx explained the form of all societies by the economic

domination of classes, with results which are too well known to need description. No two writers in the last fifty years of European literature have been so offensive to their generation, nor compelled so much new thinking on the part of the intelligentsia. There is almost nothing which is similar in their views. The one would reconstitute society upon individual character, and the other upon economic justice. But they are alike in this, that they both traced the sham of the "theologised" Democratic State to its secret lair in the motives of individuals, and both of them placed all their hopes of a regenerate society upon the power of a class to govern it. Since their time it is no longer possible to found a political conception upon an abstract unity, and this change in thought is evident in many more popular writers.

No one is more a child of Democracy, for instance, than Mr. H. G. Wells. He almost foams at the mouth at the sight of a lord. He has written many Utopian visions of the future, in which all rank appears to be abolished and everyone lives in a state of free love and perfect electrical equipment, devoted to the improvement of Science. But in the only case in which he has conceived the process or the means by which this new society is to come into being he has described it as the



work of a voluntary Aristocracy, whom he named after the Samurai of Japan. They were to be self-appointed governors of the world, self-chosen and realistically qualified for their work by the discipline of a strict morale and by the culture of their higher faculties. In later writings, whenever he has returned to the idea of a rejuvenation of society, he has suggested an Aristocracy trained not for character, but only for scientific or technical abilities.

Other writers might be quoted, such as Allen Upward, the most neglected genius of England in modern times, who used to call Democracy "the worship of the worst." His ruling idea, which he made courageous efforts to realise, was a new co-operation of the *élite* of European culture. He wished to organise the leading spirits in science, literature, and art to take power and assume guidance of the world's social and political future.

There are many other indications, in modern life and letters, of the search for *an idea beyond Democracy*. Consideration of its prospects, however, belongs to the conclusion of this essay. I would only say in advance that, whatever it may be, it must be in some sort an aristocratic conception, and I will conclude these observations upon the rise and fall of Democracy with a definition

of Aristocracy, in order to dispose of any lingering idea that Aristocracy still exists among us.

*Aristos* means best, and Aristocracy is no more and no less than the idea of a society in which the *better* a man is, the more *power* he has. The best which is implied is best according to conscious criteria, for the whole conception is nullified if we suppose that those who have power are the best simply because they happen to hold it.

In common usage, the word Aristocracy has acquired a somewhat regrettable limitation. It has come to connote a single class ruling over any others that there may be, and (especially since the age of Democratic criticism) it suggests a relationship between power and impotence. Such an Aristocracy would only be tyranny, and a negation of its name. A successful ruling class is never related to the other classes merely as the hammer to the anvil. There is always a gradation of classes, with gradation of power; and a marked distribution of real dignities, privileges and powers has distinguished every polity which can be regarded as aristocratic in its nature. Unless all the other classes of a community also have some autonomy and distinct standards of value the political class cannot rule by excellence in these same qualities.

It is because the idea of Aristocracy involves—and in fact has always depended upon—not one class, but a system of classes, not a single excellence, but a hierarchy of values, that I prefer to use the word Axiocracy to denote a state whose political life is ruled by an Aristocracy, making use of the Greek word *Axiao*, to be worth.

Owing to the division of labour, which is an essential characteristic of all human communities, Society depends upon the exercise of different types of intelligence. Class-consciousness and class-distinction are based more or less accurately upon these differences. Even in primitive communities there are well-defined classes, though they depend more upon the age or "stage of initiation" of individuals than upon their practical profession. Their comparative lack of differentiation, however, is reflected in a lower order of intellectual attainment. The development of functional classes is intimately united with the development of intelligence and reason, and it is not too much to say that a completely classless society would be a society of imbeciles.

It was the failure of Democracy that, in its haste to dispossess the agrarian tyranny, it denied

the fact of classes altogether. Yet its effect, as we have seen, was not to abolish classes. It only made way for a new order of social distinctions which it had never contemplated. Financier and bureaucrat, technician and proletarian, represent indubitable classes of men and kinds of intelligence in the modern world. But there is no aristocracy. There is nothing *axiocratic* in the distribution of power and authority among the new classes. For they have come into being *unconsciously*, whilst political efforts were bent towards the attainment of something else—that is, of equality. All these classes are equally ambitious to dominate the State, and no one knows which is the "best" for government. Their actual power varies almost exactly according to the bankers' estimate of their substantiality. There is undoubtedly a ruling class, and it is the richest. Its rule has validity, but no one supposes it has value. Whereas, the essence of an Aristocracy is that its members should possess and exhibit excellence in the function of government itself. Such an excellence cannot arise out of the unconsciousness of the community, but must be maintained from first to last by the culture of its conscious values.

In short, it must stand for a higher kind of man. Where Aristocracy prevails, a definite type of

character is cultivated as a good and an end in itself. And no such goal is entertained by those who rise in the ranks of a plutocracy.

## II *The Genesis of Classes*

THE fall of Feudalism, the rise of parliaments, and a prolonged pursuit of the ideal of Democracy have left us with a class-system as full of inequalities as that which preceded it, and only less understandable because it is an unforeseen and unconscious formation. The Democratic practice has disproved its theory, and shewn that classes are inherent in the nature of human society. But the question arises: "Should we not improve our politics if we knew more about the nature of classes? Is it not very probable that in some intelligible sense the *same classes* appear in every society only under different forms and names?" We might do better by consciously collaborating with the unconscious forces of a community than by trying to repress them.

We must remember that the science of sociology is not yet a century old. Man as yet knows very little of the laws of the super-individual organism which he creates and lives in. That scientist who will give us a method of classifying societies, com-

parable to Linnaeus' principle of the classification of plants, has yet to be born; and the sociologist whose knowledge will enable us to assist in the development of Society, as a modern botanist can assist the horticulturist, is still further distant in the future. It may be that certain categories of essential social function always determine the distribution of powers in a community. If so, there is a typical morphology of social life, just as there is a typical morphology of mammalian organism known to every zoologist.

Such an idea would surprise academic politicians as inconveniently as the Darwinian discoveries disturbed the decadent theologians. But who would have imagined, before the work of the great nineteenth-century naturalists, that the whale and the field-mouse and a host of creeping, flying, and leaping things between them were all variations of one and the same adaptable design? Who would have dared to think, until very recently, that all tribal and racial religions are variations of one universal human religion? Cults are as numerous as all the shapes of things with wings; men's myths and creeds are as fabulously differentiated as the ornithorhyncus and the gnu, and yet comparative religion, folk-lore, and psychology are slowly discovering the same basic anatomy

in every creation of man's religious consciousness. Just so, the hierarchy of Egypt, the Republic of Rome, the Estates of Feudal Realms, and the forms of all other societies may bewilder us with their differences only because our minds are still untrained to perceive their deeper identity.

The formation of societies will one day be scientifically comprehended. The discovery of its laws will be a long and difficult task, because the life of societies is not only very complex but is always a long process of growth. Societies grow out of and merge into one another, and in each one we can trace some transfusion of elements from others. Indeed, the only absolute unit of sociology comprises the whole of humanity. But the description and comparison of societies is proceeding apace, with better means than have ever before been available. Experimental methods of study are incomparably more difficult than in the case of the inorganic or even the organic sciences; but no one can say that even they are impossible, for it is a fact that we already make many social experiments of a more or less unmethodical nature.

If we study society purely descriptively, without endeavouring to discover law or system in what we describe, we become aware of a vast movement, of a timeless stream of human activity,



that underlies all our consciousness of it, both present and historical. There is a stream of mere human procreation and community flowing on whilst dynasties arise and fall, whilst religions come and go, and whilst arts and technical powers develop and disintegrate. It has a certain independence of all these conscious creations, for, though involved with them, this stream of human life survives them all. It is as though there were a vegetative substratum of humanity, upon which all that we call the "historical process" feeds and lives and changes. We know that it must have its own laws, its metabolism, its migrations and development, but of all this we know less than we care to think. Indeed, we know as little of it as we do of the complex life of any organic being. Yet we cannot separate this basic human reality from the conscious creations of civilization, for the latter arise out of it. And if we trace any civilization, or any epoch of social organization, to its beginnings, we find that each one actually originates in an attempt to formulate the laws of that psychoid stream of underlying changes. Partly, at least, it is an effort to raise this deeper life, by means of a mental conception of it, to a higher potency of conscious co-operation. And so far as it can succeed, the prizes are dazzling. They comprise

all that we know as art, as science, technics and philosophy ; in brief, they make up the pageant of history. But each civilization fails, at last, like Oedipus. The riddle of that dark side of humanity is more than it can read.

Modern sociology is an attempt to read that riddle anew—this time with all the subtleties of scientific method and in the light of an age of history. We have the so-called "regional" sociologists, a tireless band of workers who study man as a gregarious being in his many geographical environments, and the influence of these upon his group-developments. Anthropology, ethnology, and other sciences labour together to bring the necessary facts into the compass of our historical consciousness. They tell us much of the vegetative man. Yet all this is material only for the central work of sociology, which is no less than to comprehend the relation between humanity and human history—that is, to know how civilization arises. Essentially, it is to know the process of social organization.

That process is recurrent, if not actually continuous. Societies, like men, are being born and living and dying all the time. We want to know the typical embryogenesis and life-history of a society. That is, for modern man, the riddle of the Sphinx.

And it is in the vaguely discernible form of our probable answer to that riddle that we may read something of the Future of Aristocracy.

I have said that each epoch of social organization is an effort to give conscious form to the life of unconscious humanity. By unconscious humanity, of course, I mean humanity without history, where the individual is submerged in the community. Its traditions are directly communicated, its social structure is that of a family enlarged, and its religion, whatever relics of dead civilizations it may enshrine, hardly rises above the level of totem and tabu.

What, then, is the origin of that social self-consciousness which is able to transform it, turning crafts into industries, occupations into classes, villages into cities? What is it that rears the superstructure of a State upon this foundation of unlettered and toiling humanity? The origin of this phenomenon is not in an idea, for such a life does not give birth to ideas as such. It begins with a man, or with a class or group of men, rising into prominence by the conquest of others.

Conquest, as Nietzsche saw, is the origin of all aristocracy. And the origin of all civilization is in

a relation between conqueror and conquered. It is the conquest of man by man which gives birth *sui generis* to the idea of the *higher* man, of the man that overcomes.

We must note a curious fact about the conquest of man by man, that it is, in one sense, fictitious. For whatever actual and effective differences in power may exist between different men, they are potentially equal; being members of the same race, mutually fertile in propagation. Conquest, which is an ecstasy for the victor and a tragedy for the vanquished, thus creates always an unstable condition. Man cannot endure defeat. He who feels defeat immediately *thinks* victory. If he is proved less strong, he will believe himself more cunning; if proved less cunning, he will imagine himself more righteous. The fact of defeat will make him cultivate some more vivid notion of himself and try to prove it in action.

But if defeat is not to be borne, no more can the conqueror endure his conquest, for he cannot utterly believe in it. The thing he has conquered is man, a being of his own nature. He knows that a being like himself—a living intelligence—cannot be held in subjection. And having aroused hatred against himself, he feels his insecurity keenly. Invariably, in one way or another, he *disowns* his



own conquest. It was not he that did it. He hastens to ascribe it to purity of family, to virtue or to wisdom—to some being greater than himself—in a word, to his God.

And while the victors are disposed to abdicate in favour of God (at least in theory) the vanquished also, smarting under the notion of a man greater than themselves, desire to be identified with a Being higher than their conquerors—they wish to have a supremacy in heaven to balance their inferiority on earth. Since conqueror and conquered have to find a way of life together, it is not long before their different desires are united in one and the same conception. There appears, in the form of art, poetic, narrative, and plastic, the form of the Divine Man, the Progenitor, the new ideal of Man, whose attributes comprise both the proven virtues of the rulers and the more fantastic aspirations of the subject people, the mythic being who finally commands the allegiance of both.

This process of psychic dialectics is repeated many times in different spheres of life during the development of a new society. There are many conquerors: economic, technical, or intellectual as well as martial. Over all and throughout, however, appear the mighty lineaments of the original

Man, the semi-mythical Progenitor: and all subsidiary conquests must be made in his name.

This conception of Ideal Man, common to all the members of a society, is the indispensable condition, the entelechy of Society's organic life. Without it, conquest breeds rebellion, or war breeds war with meaningless reiteration. If a conquest is to bear fruit as a civilization, it must be succeeded by government, and if the invaders settle down to live with their subjects, a class-system is necessary to keep the distance between them, the victors forming "higher" classes than the vanquished. This unequal arrangement would be socially impossible but for the fact that the conquerors' idea—which is, fundamentally, the idea of the higher man—is also communicated to the subjected classes. The latter are not only physically subdued, but mentally indoctrinated, by their rulers. This ascendancy of the rulers' ideas is facilitated by the natural attitude of the conquered, who tend, out of ingratiating, snobbery, or genuine admiration of the stronger, to try on the mental accoutrement of their foes. So far as a ruler's ideas are thus accepted he is confirmed in his rank: and even while his way of thinking is somewhat of a mystery to the subject people, their natural resistance may be allayed by their efforts

to understand it. Naturally, then, a conqueror cannot consolidate his conquest if his ideas are inferior to those of the conquered, as was the case, for instance, in the Turkish invasions of European States. Even where there is equality of ideas, as between the different States of Europe, conquest is practically impossible to perpetuate in the form of social and political distinctions. The only fruitful conquests of history are those in which the invaders brought with them higher values of life or more powerful intellectual conceptions. One of the best examples of such a movement must have been the Aryan invasion of India.

It has now become possible to speak of Indian Sociology without being suspected of wilful obscurantism. No longer do the scribes of Democracy, ramping in the pride of their delusions, decry the caste-system of India as if it were nothing else but the supreme example of human unsociability and enslavement by convention. We have now a little less assurance and a little more sense of history. We know that ancient India was a melting-pot of races, of all shades from ivory to ebony, a hell of war, of racial and social confusion; and we are not now so cocksure that we could have drawn a better order than Brahmanism out of that tropical chaos even by taking them Mill's "Liberty" under

one arm and the Authorized Version of the Bible under the other. We have at last realised that India produced a very great civilisation out of an infernal welter of invasion and miscegenation; and that the Brahmans must have known something of social science. We may not admire the working of the caste-system in its present state of degeneration, doomed speedily to disappear; but we can now refer to the Laws of Manu as the book of wisdom which it is; and to the system of the four castes as one of the supreme schools of racial education. By this code the inhuman facts of caste, dictated by conquest and by the different origins of the races living together, were all gathered up and set forth in one scheme of human life of an architectonic splendour. All was unified in a single vision of Man, of his destiny and his freedom, so that every individual, into whatever section of the society he was born, could live his life *in the same terms of value and meaning*, as every other—with a sense of the same ultimate goal. The Brahmans themselves, who taught this doctrine, were of the conquering race; but their teaching reveals the conqueror's compunction—his desire, after having subjected others to his power, to fuse his spiritual life with theirs.

In India, as in every great human culture, those

whose work was to teach the nature of Man and of Society were formally recognised as the *highest* class, for the work of social organization depends more upon the understanding of human nature and the human situation than upon any other faculty. In this Indian teaching the highest value of life is that of absolute contemplation, entirely aloof from the struggle for separate existence. But this lofty goal of life is conceived as attainable, not apart from life, but as the crown of the life-process. It is attained by the discharge of duties according to position in the social structure. These positions are, of course, multifarious, but they are of four main types, which are expressed by the four castes. The four castes are by function manual workers, commercial organizers, rulers, and teachers respectively. Every individual is born into one of these classes, but all the four functions are also discharged by each individual in the course of a normal individual life, which is divided into four corresponding periods. Of these periods the first comprises childhood and youth, and ends when married life begins in a separate household. This first period is spent in acquiring the virtues of the manual worker—obedience and efficiency in one's allotted tasks. The second period, which closes with the marriage of the first-born son, is

spent in the higher responsibilities of ordering the household and family, and it demands the exercise of faculties which correspond to the commercial virtues. In this connection we may recall the fact that our words "economy" and "economics" are derived from the Greek word for a household. The third period, which should be spent in comparative if not complete freedom from practical cares, is devoted to the acquisition of philosophy and virtue, and the exercise of some measure of social authority. The fourth and last period begins with absolute withdrawal from all human affairs and is used only for concentration of the mind upon truth.

These "four ages" of man form the basis of the Indian social conception, and they recall the age-classes of many primitive societies. The classes themselves were hereditary, and some individuals were supposed to be older or younger all their lives, which was not an unnatural idea, for the intellectual development of the Aryans was obviously of a higher order than that of their subjects. Every Indian was largely reconciled with the caste divisions of his community by the feeling that his individual life contained successive experience of each of the four kinds of activity, although socially it was limited by the customs of one *caste*



alone. The whole system was sustained by that way of thinking about life, and the maintenance of that way of thinking was the function of the Brahmans, whose lives were devoted to learning and teaching. They were not allowed by their caste-rules to live by any other occupation, excepting only agriculture, at which they might labour if necessary, for the support of their families or in order to have means for bestowing alms. Normally, they lived upon the free contributions of the community. Such a means of livelihood was the most becoming to those who were born into the senior rank of life; and the most perfect discharge of the duties of the four stages of life was expected of them also, especially of the last stage. The whole of the Brahman's life was a preparation for a perfectly willing and unresentful death.

Whilst the career of a Brahman had all the disadvantages of being a state of renunciation of the natural egoistic ends of life, it possessed one great advantage. The Brahmans could not but be the most honoured members of a community whose intellectual conceptions were of their own creation. Honour was their sole emolument, but even that was to be renounced in the fourth—and solitary—stage of their life. They were supposed to know all the philosophy and science of the arts and

occupations that they were not allowed to practise, so that their knowledge might enrich, for others, the life from which they were withdrawing.

The function of the intellectuals of any community, if it is rightly conceived, prevents them from using any kind of coercion against others; for their business is to attract others into unity of thought and feeling. The true Brahman could do nothing directly to restrain a criminal from swindling the poor, for example, if that criminal's mind were so darkened by ignorance that he could not even recognise a Brahman's authority. A State made up of Brahmans alone would be a community devoid of coercion, for all its members would be mainly intent upon unity of life and understanding. In practice, most of the members of a community are occupied with different functions, and a certain amount of artificial unity must be maintained by a system of rewards and punishments.

The duty of thus regulating the actions of citizens by encouragement and discouragement was the function of the ruling caste in ancient India—the class known as Kshatriya. Their training was hardly less rigorous than that of the Brahmans, and although it was directed throughout towards action rather than contemplation, it included a very thorough study of philosophy and ethics

under a Brahman preceptor. Nor did athletic exercises and practice in the use of arms absolve a Kshatriya from the duty of restraining the senses, for self-control was considered essential to the command of others. The authority of this governing class attained its zenith in the king, from whom the power of appointment descended to all its ranks. Its work included legislation and all legal administration, the provision of national defence, the distribution of pensions, the establishment of facilities for health and recreation, and the inspection of all work done in the State.

Naturally, the prevailing ideals of character and of manners were derived from the example of the Kshatriyas. Their wealth as a class was not supposed to be great, although their higher functions were equipped with suitable displays of splendour. This class alone was maintained by taxation, the amount of such taxation being limited, according to the ancient writings, to one-sixth of the national income, and less in times of plenty. This arrangement would prevent the average income of the ruling class from exceeding that of the people in general.

These two higher castes, of thinkers and rulers, were both based upon what we may call *deductive* principles of thought and action. All their criteria

were deduced from a conception of a higher unity—in the case of the Brahmans, from Brahma, who is the unity of the Creator and His entire Creation. To the Brahman, all right understanding descended from Brahma, through the sacred writings (the Vedas), the personal apostolic teaching, and his own understanding of both of these. The Kshatriya deduced all his criteria of thought in the same way, and derived every decision for action from the person of the king and the traditions of honour as he most inwardly felt their authority.

On the other hand, the wisdom by which the manual worker lived and worked was inductive in principle and method, based upon experience of the materials in which he worked. The merchant or Vaishya caste also, whose task was that of distribution, were dominated in their work by the facts of the situation, for they had to regulate finance and exchange in accordance with the real and immediate needs of production and consumption. Important social principles were, however, involved in the work of the commercial class, and they were not so constrained by material conditions as the manual workers. The health of the whole State depended largely upon their faithfulness to the social nature of their function. They were

classed, therefore, with the two higher castes as "twice-born." The manual workers or Sudras alone were a "once-born" caste.

This division into once- and twice-born was essential to Indian sociology, and a similar conception appeared in the social idealism of Christendom which we shall have presently to consider. It implied that human society was a supernatural order of life, into which an individual had to be born again. Every one, it was explicitly taught, was born a Sudra. He could only be reborn into the higher life of conscious community through an understanding of the spirit of the Vedas, which would be acquired by the companionship and guidance of an "older" soul. A glimpse of this understanding changed the motivation of his whole life, and instead of being dominated by self-seeking and the senses, he was ruled thenceforth by the desire to sustain, in his own person, the higher life of humanity.

And what of the once-born? They were to be treated as "younger brothers" who in the nature of the case cannot yet understand the true principles of communal life, and can only share in its benefits, both material and spiritual, by accepting the authority of Society. When Buddhism, with its theory of reincarnation, became partly

absorbed into the Hindu system, this prospect was relieved by the hope of rebirth into the higher castes. But we must remember that the older Brahmanical teaching was of such a cosmic range that it must have diminished the feeling of the importance of all social distinctions. Every man was Brahma—each was no less than an incarnation of the supreme Being, only some were more deeply enmeshed than others in ignorance of their true nature. The manual worker was prepared to admit that the nature of his livelihood involved a greater degree of ignorance, but what matter, since he also was Brahma, sustaining the fabric of the world by that very sacrifice?

The sole purpose of this slight sketch of the four-caste system has been to show that the castes were conceived as the essential functions of social life. The Indian thinkers believed that the formation of any true society depended upon the recognition of precisely these four categories of citizenship. And since this belief sustained as enduring a society and as brilliant a culture as history records, it has a valid claim to consideration and comparison with the beliefs that were current in other civilizations.



We shall find, perhaps with surprise, that four closely corresponding classes were recognized in the development of other cultures. But before pursuing this theme it may be as well to forestall an objection which is likely to arise in the modern mind.

The philosophy of caste, it may be said, was only an attempt to make bearable the facts of military and economic exploitation. A modern psychologist might say that it was no more than a "rationalization" of the wills of rulers to exert their power. It is perfectly true that religion and philosophy have often been abused in this way, and made into the instruments of mere class ascendancy, and the ideas of Brahmanism were largely perverted to this evil end. But their original purpose was to bridge differences, not to maintain them. The Brahmans found men divided by differences of grouping, occupation, and environment, differences which they were precisely as powerless to abolish as the present reader is impotent to abolish the colour-problem in the United States of America. What they did was to interpret this situation and explain these differences in the same way to all concerned, showing them to be functional positions in a single human drama. They could not directly alter the facts,

but they could alter their meaning. Even this, however, they could only do at the cost of renouncing all power—military, economic, or technical—and by living in unique relation with other classes, wholly dependent upon them, but freely teaching them all it was useful for them to know.

By thus transforming the meaning of life to a whole community, the Brahmans altered the life itself; for a clearer self-consciousness changed its future development. The idea of *Dharma*, or duty according to one's stage of life, did in fact largely condition the conduct of all men from princes to workmen, and wholly transformed the behaviour of many. Life, with all its inequalities, could then take on the aspect of organic unity; and the work of the humblest craftsman could become an art, illumined with the same spirit of creation as the sculpture of the temple and the tapestry of the palace. No such social creation would have been possible if the teaching of the Brahmans had not been based upon real understanding of life, and a co-operation with universal human motives.

It must be admitted, however, that the hereditary castes of India present a somewhat static picture of Society. A society is not a fixed system of relations, but a growing and developing organism. In order to see these four functions of social

life in their dynamic reality, as principles of social creation, we must endeavour to discern their working in the actual process of history. We must trace them in action, as the builders of a civilization.

### III *Regeneration and Decay*

AS we have seen, the fourfold order of society was both the theory and practice of civilization in ancient India. It reappears in another important focus of world-culture—in the Periclean period of Athens—but this time in the realm of pure theory. Plato's "Republic" is a work of the highest political philosophy, which does not pretend to have any direct connection with the practical politics of its author's time. It is a great literary presentation of the perfect *idea* of the State, and, in the Platonic philosophy, all real events and actual things are regarded as the imperfect copies of ideas. The State, like everything else, is the working out of an archetypal idea in a medium which can never quite perfectly embody it; and in Plato's conception the idea itself corresponds closely to that of Manu.\* The purpose of human existence is to rise to the per-

\*The relation between the Platonic and Indian conception is well defined by Professor E. J. Urwick in his "The Message of Plato."

ception of the Ideas, to know the archetypal realities of which the things of the senses are but transitory and misleading impressions. Therefore society should be shaped and ordered by those who know these higher realities. As knowers of reality, they are philosophers, but the knowledge itself is such that it impels them to take their place in politics and to act as aristocrats or guardians of the community. Plato recognises three, and not four, classes of men. The merchant class and the manual workers appear to be grouped together in one, as workers for material gain. Sometimes the manual workers seem to be excluded from the scheme altogether as slaves; for Plato did not regard the abolition of slavery as possible.

We shall pass over the Platonic conception without further comment, although it is of the highest theoretical value and importance, for our present purpose would not be well served by another ideal and static presentation of society. These two social conceptions, the Indian and the Platonic, comprise the complete argument for the principle of axiocracy, because they demonstrate that the success of every social effort depends upon the co-existence of other social aims of "higher" worth. The success of manual work over any

given period does *in fact*, depend upon enterprise, marketing and exchange. But these latter are possible only according to social confidence and political peace, which belong to the sphere of *government*. Government depends for its efficiency upon the highest and most spiritually expensive activity of all—that of maintaining the social and intellectual consciousness of the people. Thus, spiritually considered, the classes are linked together in dependence, workers dependent upon organizers, organizers upon aristocrats, aristocrats upon thinkers, and thinkers upon nothing but the Idea. But, materially considered, the relation of dependence is reversed: the whole superstructure of society being reared upon the bending backs of labourers, and each of the higher functions founded upon that which is the next below it.

Apart from this logical precedence which belongs to the "higher classes" as functions, we can discern a historical precedence in time. It would be justifiable to say that every civilization, or phase of social culture, begins with Brahmins and ends with Sudras. Its progenitors are persons who are thinkers—at least in the sense of possessing a universal idea of society: they are succeeded by those who interpret this as a ruling idea, and enforce it, and yet later by others who extend its

rule by compromise and adaptation: finally it ends in a general slavery in which every one is subservient to the complex order which has been imposed upon all. Even rulers and thinkers must then live by a more or less mechanical discharge of prescribed social obligations. It is this process of development in time which we shall now endeavour to trace in the history of Christian civilization.

Christian civilization was built by quarrying in the ruins of several previous civilizations, particularly those of Rome. The Roman idea had been founded upon two fundamental motives—psychically, upon the power of the father, and rationally, upon the notion of equity and law. It had centralised power in the seniors, or *senate* of the city-state, and it was by the power and the morale of its ruling idea, as much as by dint of arms, that Rome had been able to conquer the ancient world. Conquest itself had been the second stage of Rome's progress, when she had subdued and imposed government upon the surrounding nations, symbolising her idea by the institution of an Emperor worshipped with divine honours and often supplanted, like the high priests of Dordona, by "right" of assassination. This second stage had been succeeded by a period of consolidation, when

the chief problems of the Empire had become economic, and its triumphs of the quieter order of administration, engineering, finance and conciliation. Finally it reached its degeneration in universal Roman citizenship, the 'megalopolitan' parasitism of the capital and the power of the mob. Yet the story must be summed up as a nett gain to humanity, an advance in the average consciousness of the race. Not only had millions lived with a slightly higher standard of life and a wider view of the world than was possible before the Roman invasions, but they had gained a tradition, which even the dark ages that followed could not wholly efface, of equity, disciplined life, and of world-organization as things not only desirable but possible in the life of man.

It was amidst the decay of this culture, founded upon the worship of the father, that the Christian sect arose with its new worship of the son. We have seen that every phase of culture is founded upon an idea of man as conqueror. And Christianity is the worship of a conqueror whose kingdom is not actual, but potential; not present, but to come in the future. This strange conqueror, moreover, though equal to God and even one with Him, is a man with a realistic biography—a figure more typical than mythical. The first phase of Christian



culture was the working out of this idea of a saviour who was not of a previous generation nor of a higher order of being, but *one of us*. Its original ethic was that of the perfect relation between equals. Entry into any of the groups of Christians which were scattered throughout the empire involved, before all things, renunciation of the individual's conventional status in life, whether it was moral, social or economic. Publican and harlot, patrician and scholar, became equal before the one law of the new community, which was the law of love. Their conduct was guided by this one intuitive criterion—that when they were in a state of love to the community and its Prototype, they considered themselves to be right, and when they felt themselves divided from the community, they were wrong. The new morale and habit of life which slowly developed from this practice was founded upon experience which might be called individually communal. It was the uncompromising equality and unity of the early Christian *oecumene*, or group, that revealed experimentally the natural working relations of individuals. Each group of this new society was a nucleus of men and women living in a new co-operation according to their instinctive capacities. That was the secret of their magnetic power in a civiliza-

tion which was increasingly repressing humanity by the centralization of power and the imposition of law.

In this first stage of their development these groups acquired the knowledge of practical psychology which made them formidable, for they had continual internal and mutual battles with every subtlety of deceit and egoism. At the same time their conflict with the world, in which they lived as an unpopular and insurgent element, trained them in diplomatic subtlety, courage and power of sacrifice, until they were stronger than their enemies. This first stage of development closes with the conversion of the empire to Christianity. In reality it had passed away earlier than this, when the new religion began to be organized as a world power, and its intuitive morale began to be replaced by the authority of certain councils. In the first period of its working, authority had been purely spiritual and personal. Now it became formal and statutory. Formerly the greatest personalities had in practice exercised natural leadership; but now great personalities began to be restrained as undesirable and heretical influences. Nevertheless, there was a communal sanction for this compromise. What was now needed was not a further creative development of

the new life, but the salvation of the older world of men by the wider dissemination of the new values. The self-discipline and mutual love by which the few had attained to a higher life made them demand a change in the order of Society, to make a better life possible for others.

In the first period of Christianity only *absolute* adherence to the new faith was of any value. A man could hardly obtain knowledge of the new idea unless he surrendered himself and all his possessions to the service of the community. But in the second period merely formal conversion was significant, for it involved the convert in a new style of life and put him into training under a new kind of authority. When we read of hundreds of barbarians being baptized after defeat in battle, or of vanquished kings being allowed to keep their thrones on condition of accepting Christian unction, we know that they could not have been giving any real intellectual assent to the religion they were pledged to believe. It did not matter whether they understood the new doctrine: they and their children were going to *learn* it, and to live under its sway.

That the Gospel of Christ could be propagated by the sword seems indeed paradoxical, if not absurd. The truth of life which was lived in

Galilee and in the first two or three centuries of Christian communities can never be communicated by violence, unless by the pure force of the spirit and the imagination; it cannot even be embodied in any religious organization as such, for its kingdom is not of this world. But the kings and warriors—those martial spirits who would in any case have imposed their will upon this world—could and did take from the Christian communities their ideas of life and standards of value. Those standards and those ideas now gave form and meaning to their conquests. What they began to establish by force was a new *civilization*, only a derivation from original Christian culture; but it was better than the worship of Odin or the human sacrifices of the Druids, for under its protection the world-message of Christianity was disseminated throughout Europe and a new civilization created.

The chaos of the fallen empire was gradually transformed, in this militant phase of Christendom, into the comparative order of the Feudal system. The civilization which ensued was far from stable. It was characterised by rapid changes, devastating dissensions, and a wealth of new developments which can only be compared with the exuberance of its architectural invention. But

it was true to the main outlines of the fourfold order of Society—it lived in the minds of its members as an essentially *axiocratic* conception.

The intellectual and educational power was embodied in the Church which, for many centuries, was not so much a rigid system as an idea which was continually giving birth to new movements and original interpretations. The Church was a kind of super-state which permeated many countries, often developing its own estates and living its own life within them. Its precedence to the secular State was not only expressed symbolically when the Emperor of the 'Holy' Roman Empire was crowned by the Pope (as kings also were crowned by archbishops), but it was sometimes very practically demonstrated. The Church could undermine the rule of a king by withdrawing its moral support.

The secular State, from which the Church was largely independent, was an organization of the territorial chiefs under the king. These landlords developed into a ruling class whose numbers sometimes exceeded the need for them—and this was a principal cause of dynastic wars and crusades. Originally, in the dark ages of the Roman breakdown, they had been the protectors of their localities against raiding and disorder, and one of

the works of Christianity was to endeavour to confirm them in this function by organizing them into orders of chivalry. The orders of religion and those of chivalry comprised the two ruling classes of Feudalism, entirely distinct from each other, but ubiquitous in power, castle rising everywhere beside cathedral, and church beside manor.

The third class of mediaeval society derived its organization from the craft guilds, which originated, partly at all events, as lay orders of the Church. The guilds came to comprise all kinds of handicraftsmen and merchants, co-operating in defence of their work and insuring their own members against destitution. They were authorized by royal charter to regulate their affairs, they enjoyed various privileges, and their organisations were invariably the backbone of the city life. Their status, though plebeian, was considerably superior to that of the fourth class—the agricultural labourers, who only emerged from serfdom late in the Middle Ages. Even serfdom, however, appears to have been a more secure and tolerable state of life than that of an agricultural labourer at any time between the Renaissance and the nineteenth century, and that of the yeomen or free men was certainly very much better.



The second period of Christendom—the period of organization and of the imposition of Christian values upon society—may be said to end with the Renaissance. At the Renaissance the mediaeval “empire” began to break up into nations with a consciousness more and more exclusively national.

Europe could no longer subsist as a living organism of nations, for Christendom was no longer conceived in thought as a single syntagma. The aristocratic classes were by this the heaviest losers, for their function lost its glamour as a Divine or universal sanction; they forfeited the dignity of being members of a super-national caste. And in this phase of social evolution the third order of men—the mercantile class—rose to power. In search of gold and merchandise, they encircled the globe and began to build up a new conception of empire and world-politics based upon material exchange. Europe entered upon a phase of development which would be called, in terms of Indian sociology, a *Vaishya* culture, a condition in which the merchant class rises to power and mercantile conceptions also dominate in other spheres of life. In most of the movements of religious reform for which this age was so remarkable, practical—and even definitely mercantile—values are conspicuous. The relation of the soul

to God is expressed in the same terms as that of debtor to creditor. In the puritan movement in England there is definitely a notion that virtue is accumulated, and virtue achieved as the “reward of abstinence”—which was also, of course, the first theory of the nature of financial capital. And in the intellectual life generally, the labour of thinking was increasingly applied to what was profitable or interesting in itself. The instruments of thought which the mediaeval schools had forged for metaphysics and ethics were employed in natural science, and this opened up the way to all the modern triumphs of mechanical invention. For the time, however, the change in economic life was due far more to commercial and financial, than to mechanical advances.

It was in the fourth age, beginning with the French and Industrial Revolutions, that Christendom entered upon its final fulfilment as a civilization of wholly plebeian status. Then, under Democracy and Capitalism, all the four classes of men, thinkers, rulers, organizers and workers became merged into a single confusion. No value was then seriously believed in, except the value of physical objects which can be exchanged. This led to our present economic situation, when the production of objects is increased by machinery,



in great excess, until markets are choked and stagnate, whilst the social chaos prevents adequate distribution of the increasing wealth. Democracy decrees that politics are everybody's business, but expresses them in such a way that each citizen is in theory responsible for everything and in practice can influence nothing. Hence an oppressive sense of limitation, frustration or impotence colours a life which is *substantially richer* than man ever knew before. The danger of war becomes greater than ever, and there is an ominous tendency to regard everyone equally as a combatant.

This cycle of civilization, which we have thus described in wide and loose generalizations, is now seen to have ended, in a sense, where it began. It began with *equality* and it ends with *egalitarianism*. In its beginning, in the *oecumene*, persons accepted persons, directly and simply, as equal co-operators in the realization of their common idea. At its end, all are endowed *legally* with equal rights, so that they need not deal with one another personally or directly at all. Individuals are safely entrenched and defended against each other. In objective fact, persons are more gregarious than formerly, but in subjective feeling more isolated. The elaborate systems of formal co-operation which unite them are therefore felt as

compulsions or shackles. Wars and revolutions are planned upon a universal scale, in the hope of sweeping away an order of civilization in which man feels increasingly uncomfortable in heart.

The distribution of wealth lags farther and farther behind its total increase. For Democracy, by confirming each individual against all, has made men's aims more narrow and personal. In theory all are equal: in behaviour they are mutually respectful or evasive, but in soul they are nearly frantic with unsatisfied ambition. It is the *feelings* of men and women which are murdered by this state of affairs, and the suffering enters into their nerves, producing neuroses and functional disorders which afflict society like a plague, except in those quarters where they are over-shadowed (but not expelled) by the physical privations of extreme poverty.

This is the end of a cycle of civilization, a phase of disintegration and of imminent downfall. But its potentiality is yet great. For it has raised individuals to a height of individuality and self-consciousness, without which they would never have conceived their responsibility for the ordering of the world's future—the world which has now swum whole and entire into the field of each one's vision. Only this strain, this tension, this

#### ARISTOCRACY AND THE MEANING OF CLASS RULE

simultaneous heightening and repression of myriad ambitions could nerve us to the task that lies before us. Before we can undertake it, however, we must forsake our psychic isolation and share the problems of life which we have so unequally divided between us. The world waits for a common action. Somewhere must be produced, out of all the ranks of many societies, a new *oecumene*. Only such a movement of pure community can rediscover the real will of mankind, and give the mandate to a new aristocracy.

#### IV *The Recognition of Social Function*

IT must be clear to the reader who has followed so far, that the four social types are not dependent upon political or governmental recognition. Whether they are recognised or not, they give to the community what life and unity it has. Class distinctions which are decreed by governments or sovereigns may confirm the realities we are discussing; but they may also wholly misrepresent them. History is full of accounts of kings who ruled in name when the virtual power was in the hands of others, of priesthoods which long survived their real spiritual leadership, and of merchant classes which exploited labour far more than they facilitated its division. It is true that the manual workers as a class do not so easily belie their function. Those who produce the basic commodities of life, such as corn and clothing, are kept more closely within the realities of their business. But it is a mistake to ascribe a moral superiority to the workers on that account, as many moralists are inclined to do. The morale of

## ARISTOCRACY AND THE MEANING OF CLASS RULE

the manual workers, and their ultimate efficiency, also depends upon their co-operation with the other classes of the community. If the latter become disintegrated and finally destroyed, the workers must produce them again out of their own ranks, which they can only do with great loss and difficulty. A State is the healthier, the more closely the external lineaments of its political order correspond with the real functions of its constituent classes, and the morale of a community depends ultimately upon the truth of its explicit constitution. When a political structure has become confused or fictitious, the State may continue to hang together somehow, just as a man whose mental life is wholly deranged may live on for some time as a fairly healthy animal, but physical corruption, though invisible, has already begun.

The true political constitution is designed to maintain that social order in which men can realise themselves according to their types. Individually considered, these types are psychic realities.\* Socially realized, they are occupations: men are

\* C. G. Jung, of Zurich, in his "Psychological Types," distinguishes four main types of psychic constitution which may well correspond with the types we are here discussing. It is true that other modern psychologists deny inherent types, and claim instead to demonstrate types of psychic adaptation. From our present standpoint this distinction is not important.

## THE RECOGNITION OF SOCIAL FUNCTION

born into their types but they need training for the appropriate occupations. In some societies men have been deemed to have been born into their classes, as in the Indian caste-system, where a man was often obliged to follow even the special trade of his father. A hereditary class-system is, however, unnecessary, although its evils have been much exaggerated. If the hereditary principle is limited to the four main classes, it does not seriously restrict the scope of the individual's powers. It is when the attempt is made to predestine the individual to one specific activity in his class that the hereditary principle is abused; but to be born into the limitation of one of the four main classes is little more hardship than to be born into one nation. The activities of a whole class are so multifarious that individuals of thinking, ruling, organizing, and routine capacities can find full expression in all of them. In the freer societies of the modern world, individuals are left to find their own way to suitable professions, and they tend to succeed in those positions to which their psychic constitution inclines them, but the lack of any definite class-structure makes decision more difficult, and many are unsuitably employed. In those older civilizations where class was hereditary the number of occupational misfits

was probably no greater than now. It may have been much smaller, for a man's sphere of life being at least partially defined from birth, he was trained from the first for his function, and the actual fulfilment of the social function depends more upon training than upon any other factor. In our present civilization, every child is supposed to be free to become an admiral, an aeronaut, a writer, president or premier of a nation, a lift-operator, or anything else. This wealth of opportunity is truly magnificent, but it is also confusing. It is even worse, for it is not true that it exists.

Classes remain largely hereditary in practice, although the hereditary principle may be denied. But it would now be impossible, as well as undesirable to revive heredity as the basis of class-distinction. Nor is it necessary to do so, for the different kinds of function are sufficiently grounded in individual psychology. They can be clearly detected, for example, in the way that different persons strive for superiority, and a striving for *some* kind of superiority has been shewn to be present in all human activity. The thinker, for example, or the reflective type, is invariably a sufferer from unusually intense feelings of isolation and separation from the life around him. This compels him to reflective activity, whether of an

intellectual, philosophic, or artistic nature, in an effort to cope with reality—to get above it by *understanding* it. He is invariably aspiring to grasp *absolute* truth in some form or other. Eccentricity and a disordered life often betray the separateness of the reflective type; but in its finest individuals the separateness itself is consciously realised, and is corrected by educational work of social value and by scientific understanding.

In every community also, natural rulers are distinguishable, who dominate the life around them by purely personal ascendancy, and they may, or may not, be found in positions which carry an institutional authority. They rule by the habitual striving of their own natures, which impels them towards a concrete ideal of personality. For this reason they tend to set the standards of personal behaviour, and current criteria of honour, courtesy, and generosity are mainly derived from their example. The type itself, which is characterised by its unconcealed striving for immediate personal superiority, ranges from bumptious upstarts to those sovereign natures whose graciousness lies in the security of their self-control.

The third type aims at superiority over circumstances, and generally seeks an economic sphere of



action. To control the supplies is as sure a way as any to be master of the circumstances. The keenest savour of personal authority may be denied to the *entre-preneur*, to the merchant or to the owner of some essential commodity, but he often has the longest, if latest, laugh of any : he feels that his kind of superiority is more securely founded than that of other men. This type sometimes produces tricksters and speculators, but in the best cases, the sense of superiority is firmly united with social responsibility, and produces the highest achievements of economic organization.

There is also the fourth type, by which superiority is conceived as superiority over things themselves. It develops the practical and technical capacities of the true cultivator and craftsman. The limitation of this type lies in over-concentration upon the senses, an unwillingness to look beyond the immediately tangible result. This is the only type that is in danger of losing itself in its function, whereas the others tend to lose their function in themselves.

These are types, but it must be remembered that workers of all types are needed in each of the functioning classes. Everyone also combines all the four types of activity in his behaviour, but with a dominant tendency in one or more direc-

tions, and the majority are capable, with the right training, of finding their function in any class. Only those in whom one type wholly predominates, both by nature and by the environment of childhood, are less adaptable : they can only make good in their corresponding class, and in one of its most typical functions.

. . . . .

Thus the reality of classes is deeper than that of their recognised forms ; and if the political and social constitution misrepresents this reality, endeavouring to impose a class-system of its own, the real classes will nevertheless break through into political life, distorting the system to their own working. We can see something of this process in the development of English political institutions since the Renaissance.

In the Feudal system, as we have seen, the Clergy, Lords, and Commons very clearly represented the reflective, ruling, and organizing functions of Society. These were distinct and independent powers, for although the Clergy and the Lords sat together in council, each had its separate orders and assemblies, and the Church nearly succeeded in placing its own members under a wholly separate legal code and administration. Its

activities comprised practically all the learning, science, and art of the time, and its personal co-operation in the highest affairs of State was natural to an age in which social power and welfare were really believed to be founded upon moral realities and ultimately upon the true philosophical understanding of a divine revelation.

The third estate, or Commons, was originally a fact of life rather than a factor in the Constitution. The men who personally directed the labour of fields and workshops and controlled the exchange of their produce, were a power in themselves; and such organizations as they had naturally created, through their guilds, trading relations and customs, made them a power in common. They were called into council by the King, not at all because they aspired to higher responsibility, but because it was impossible to rule without them. As for the manual workers themselves, they had no direct representation in the government. Some considerable degree of organization of a political and social character descended to them through the guilds in the towns and through the church and the manor in the country, and by these means they were far more socially integrated than the proletariat of modern times.

An ancient drawing of a meeting of Edward the

First's Parliament is familiar to students of the English Constitution as the oldest picture of Parliament we possess. It reveals very graphically how the rulership of the realm appeared to the imagination of the artist. The king is in the centre, high over all, and dwarfing every one else in the scene, excepting the two archbishops upon his extreme right and left. Lords, bishops, mitred abbots, commoners and lawyers, are ranged about the base of the picture like rows of rabbits. It is easy to see that the dominion of the king is the pivot of the whole assembly, and the two archbishops are its prime pillars. This assembly has one meaning, and that is *the unity of the realm*. Each of the diminutive figures lined round upon benches and woollsacks, was, as we know, a local ruler in his own right; each exercised, in his own place and function, authority over a "going concern." He did not particularly want to be in the picture, he had something else to do. But each was summoned and bound in duty to attend, both by the idea of unity in the indivisible Church and by its living representative in the person of the King. We have here, not an assemblage of forensic talents chosen to govern by talking if they can, but a conclave of governors being made to talk together. Their meeting together, whether

it is a matter of persuasion or coercion, or of both, is a co-operation between *functioning powers*.

During the Renaissance England became separated from the rest of Christendom, and the attempt was made, with apparent success, to unite Church and State under the headship of the King. But in truth the strength and character of Feudalism had lain in its clear logical distinction between the powers temporal and spiritual. So long as the one was conceived as centred in the Emperor or King, and the other in the Pope, men were free from the nightmare of a tyranny which could be absolute both in theory and practice. A baron might be strong, but also he might be wrong. The bishop might curse, but he could not kill: this new English experiment threatened to unite the two authorities and create a state in which the millennium would be "deemed" to have arrived and the decree of the King be valid *ipso facto* as the voice of God. It amounted to a union between powers which experience has put asunder in every human conscience, and when a king had the temerity to take this union seriously and to assert his own Divine Right as a concrete reality the realm was soon in convulsions. There were but two ways of dealing with such an impossible situation. One was to decapitate the King, and the other, to

reduce him to an ambiguous position without real initiative. By taking the first way, England made the second practicable. The Crown was allowed to retain both spiritual and temporal prerogatives upon the condition of exercising neither.

Meanwhile, the House of Lords, consisting of nobles and bishops together, stood for a new power in the national life. Whilst its combined strength was now less than the previous single authority of either Church or nobility, it did achieve the prestige of being the supreme assembly of culture in the realm. At the same time, however, the House of Commons rose to much greater power, and became nominally divided into two parties, which increasingly reflected the agrarian-aristocratic, and the industrial-commercial interests respectively. In this way the same three essential functions of the State were discharged under new names, the workers remaining as usual without any effective influence in the State. Even until the beginning of the present century the political power of these three class-interests was more or less expressed in the House of Lords, and the right and the left sides\* of the House of Commons respectively. The personnel of the parties changed

\*Right and Left, of course, signifying Tory-Whig, Conservative-Liberal.



slowly, as the bases of economic power changed from land to factory, from trading to bond-holding, but there was a perceptible continuity of class-division in the English constitution, with its Lords and its two kinds of Commons, from the Revolution until Mr. Asquith's attack upon the House of Lords.

When the veto of the House of Lords was abolished, that chamber was deprived of effective constitutional power ; but at the same time a *third* party (called the Labour party) appeared in the House of Commons, and immediately began to grow to formidable numbers. From this point, however, even the memory of government by functional bodies could no longer be reflected in a constitution which had become definitely unitarian both in fact and in conception. In a unitarian government there are likely to be three parties as a rule, a Right, a Left, and a Centre, for the simple reason that there are three ways of looking at any question, the affirmative, the negative, and the opportunistic. But the parties being democratically elected, they are unable to speak for definite interests, cultural, economic or political, for they are supposed to assume responsibility for all these at the same time. The parties lose contact with class-interests, except for the bureaucratic interest.

A Conservative may be either an innovating industrialist, an agrarian, or a financier. Already a "Labour" member is more likely to be a professional or University man than a manual worker : and it would be difficult to discover what class of vocation prevails among Liberals.

In a modern State there is no accredited organization of culture, nor is there any council which is professedly economic in a national sense. Excluded from the Constitution, however, these two faculties are not thereby diminished in power. Indeed, a state of unlicensed freedom may give them greater influence, and more for harm than for good.

The press, for example, is the greatest instrument of culture in the modern world, as yet unrivalled even by the screen and the wireless. Yet it has no public connection with any other cultural powers, such as the universities or scientific bodies. It is not only that no common councils exist between these different cultural interests, but the very *idea* of any correlation of their forces is non-existent. If it were proposed, it would be suspected as something tyrannical. Meanwhile, though it is publicly free from allied activities, the press is privately inspired by various interests which are not cultural at all.



The economic faculties in the modern world are similarly unco-ordinated for public purposes. There are three main faculties that count in economics: finance, grounded in banking; management, based upon technical improvement; and labour. Their lack of co-operation appears in unemployment, poverty among the workers, and in failure to distribute the enormous surplus of modern production. These are consequences which no one enjoys, but few quarrel with the disorganization itself, which is regarded as inevitable, for even among the progressive it is the fashion to regard economics as a sphere of unconscious forces. From Adam Smith onward, practically all modern economists profess to reveal unconscious (and generally uncontrollable) forces which are supposed to rule the production and distribution of wealth. The idea of a co-operative control of their respective functions by producers, distributors and consumers is either not entertained at all, or is regarded as chimerical. Indeed, it is widely believed that the condition of prosperity in economics is the freedom of all individuals to gain what they can, in any way legally possible. As in the case of culture, any idea of unification would be feared as a threat of oppression.

This fear of oppression is significant. At the beginning of the movement towards Democracy its enemies would surely have prophesied that its success would end in the horrors of anarchy. On the contrary, it has culminated in the liveliest fears of tyranny. Military conscription, financial oppression, political dictatorship, and proletarian oligarchy are the bugbears of the modern world, and the apprehension of these dangers is all too well founded. Even our idealistic movements for reform, from Fascism to Communism, are all conceived so that they threaten to enforce some dreadful uniformity upon Society. Something must have gone wrong with our thinking, that we should have become unable to conceive of regeneration and liberty except in terms of restriction and servitude.

That which so vitiates our thinking is the unitarian conception of politics, which presents all its problems in terms of the highest abstraction. The reformer is led to think in the formula: "Given supreme and undivided power, I could set everything in order." But what is order, if not a state of balance and reciprocity between the several powers that function in a community? An improvement in order demands power *within* these constituent bodies as well as *over* them. The more

our politics pretend to ignore the corporate social powers (such as trusts, trade-unions, and organised professions) that exist, and to treat all citizens as equal and isolated units—the nearer politics approach to imaginary supremacy but to actual impotence. Such is, in fact, the nemesis of modern governments, which steadily extend their powers and responsibilities, measured by output of schedules and stationery, but are increasingly made to feel the pressure of social forces which they cannot understand nor regulate. Culture and economics continue to develop and do the work by which we live, but they do so without reference to the life of the community as a whole. The *whole* problem is supposed to be in the charge of politics, but unfortunately it is an empty whole, from which the parts have been extracted.

This unitarian conception of politics is the result of a fallacy which makes itself felt throughout modern life. In economics, for instance, all writers worthy of the name have been endeavouring for upwards of a century to free men from the illusion of regarding money as a real value in itself. They have failed to do so, although men are quite intelligent enough to perceive that money is, communally considered, only the lubricant of circulation, and the medium of exchange. It

remains, nevertheless, that in one sense a sum of money is worth more to an individual than anything he can buy with it—for it can buy anything else in the whole world up to the same price. A chest of drawers may be worth ten pounds, if I want it and have an eye for a good piece of furniture. But is it worth ten-pounds-worth of potential omnipotence? Do not most people feel—to parody the Persian :—

"I know not what it is the merchants sell  
One half so precious as the stuff we pay them."

No doubt many people spend their share of omnipotentiality freely, but few, I think, without a secret sense of incontinence and guilt. For money, that abstract nothing according to true economics, is to the egoistic imagination the most godlike of all possessions. It *is* nothing, but it might be anything. Over and above its exchange value it has a value like the vote in modern politics, which gives a citizen no status whatever in field, factory, workshop, or any real relation of life—but confers on him the *idea* of having power in the highest councils of the world.

The fallacy in question finds corresponding expression in religious cults in the search for a supreme state of mind. In itself, of course, this is a legitimate concept of religion. But there has

## ARISTOCRACY AND THE MEANING OF CLASS RULE

long been an excessive tendency for new cults to be founded wholly upon the desire to obtain possession of this highest and most ecstatic subjective state, as if it were an alternative to ordinary functioning, an exoneration from it—and something absolutely *better*. Portions of Eastern religions, abstracted from their context, have been much used to supply the West with this kind of spiritual alibi.\* The attractiveness of these cults is to be found in the fact that they endow the individual, in his imagination, with a direct participation in Supreme Power. It is that quality of absoluteness which also gives to the bank-note and the political vote a value far beyond their efficacy.

Our thought is corruptible by such notions of supremacy because modern men are haunted by a craving to be reassured of their *worth*. The confusion of social classes has deposed men from their real, intelligible *power of position* in the commonwealth (in idea, though of course not completely in fact) to the rank of being merely interchangeable particles. Those whose work gives them the consciousness of being responsible social functionaries are only a dwindling minority. Work

\*This implies no reflection, of course, upon the study of religions of the East as such, nor upon their immense contribution to the world's wisdom.

## THE RECOGNITION OF SOCIAL FUNCTION

is very subtly degraded, as if it were practically an a-social activity—a thing which each does for himself and his own good alone. It is true, of course, that relics of functional dignity still cling to the military, legal, and to some learned professions, but they are not sufficient for the health of the State, and they also deteriorate in the prevailing atmosphere. It is a natural consequence that the very structure of men's thoughts upon all social matters should be distorted by an unconscious striving towards individual supremacy. By far the greater number of citizens have no reasonable hope that their work will ever be recognized as a social function. In work they are only related to Society as that which buys their time—that is, their life—for so much an hour at market rates, just as cloth is bought by the yard.

The triumph of Democracy has confused the notions of the public good and of one's responsibility to the State. These things are no longer felt to proceed from the attitude to one's position in life, but to be a kind of ambition for some power of control outside of life or above it. There is an upward pressure to enthrone the average citizen as king, and it appears to succeed. A prime minister must now be attached to a briar-pipe or a cloth cap to show that he is ordinary; but he moves



about with royal honours and attentions from the press. He is expected to fulfil—by proxy—the high fantasy of Democracy, which is—*anybody enthroned above everybody*. In theory, almost everything is in his power, but in practice we find that he can only mediate between forces which have lost their autonomous control. Our politics can rarely decide how things shall happen; they can only break the shock of events which have become inevitable. For people have not been trying to socialise the forces with which they are immediately concerned, such as manufacture, money, labour, and cultural activities. They have tried to communise *power* itself in the abstract, and in so far as they succeed it naturally turns out to be power over nothing in particular. Each citizen's quantum of real power lies in his function. His productive work is not the whole of his function, it is true, but is the foundation of it. His measure of socially creative power, therefore, depends first of all upon control of the mode and the purpose of his work.

Only one thing can ultimately change the inner nature of work from mere acquisitive occupation to social function: and that is the explicit recognition of each class of workers in the community's polity. It is by its expressed form that Society

educates its members, for their ambitions are trained by experience of the institutions under which they live. Citizenship cannot be taught without the visible example of institutions which unify the ruling functions of life, for true citizenship is not a special kind of public activity, but a mode of all activities. There have been attempts to teach it in the State schools, somewhat as if it were an additional accomplishment. This is of very little use if pupils are to find as soon as they leave school and enter into the world's real life, that the public good is their direct responsibility once every five years at an election, and the rest of the time is to be spent in a struggle of each for himself, and the "dole" take the hindmost.

The whole constitution of our working life needs reformation. And how shall we attempt it, since it is beyond the scope of education alone? The answer, which arises spontaneously in the modern mind, is that the State should undertake it. But that answer proceeds from the very bias which we desire to correct. The unitarian and democratic State is precisely incompetent to organise all workers, cultural, productive, and distributive, according to their *own* principles of action as self-conscious organs of the whole State. This last is



an idea beyond Democracy: it is the conception of Axiocracy.

Axiocracy, the aristocratic movement of the future, cannot be imposed from above. It cannot be planned like the cadres of an army organization and filled up with passive recruits. It must arise in many quarters, sporadically, upon the basis of human equality which Democracy has given. It will be a new class-consciousness of people who are able to make the same kind of contribution to life. Groups of workers will become aware of their own type and function, not in itself alone, but in relation to all other functions of communal life. All these sporadic and separate origins will then develop together by a common intelligence. For Axiocracy requires, not the subjection of the parts of the community to the whole, but the regulation of all its parts by the *idea* of the whole.

## V *Science and Axiocracy*

SO far, this essay upon the future of Aristocracy has been mainly concerned with its past. Our paradoxical approach to the subject was justified because it enabled us to see more clearly the nature of the being whose future we were trying to predict. If we know what Society has been and is, we may be able to say something of what it will be. Not that its future can be foreseen precisely: in large part it will be determined by the free will of its members. But we can discern a certain frame of potentialities within which that free will can work. The more clearly this frame of possibilities is recognised, the more latitude there is for the free and unpredictable contribution of men as individuals.

Let us try to apply what we have seen to the present predicament of Society, which has now become planetary in scope, the human society of the world. It is Western humanity which now rules the world much more than less, and yet Western humanity is very divided. It cannot

develop the social order of the world, for its own mind is confused about social problems. Order is the function of Aristocracy, and we have seen that the aristocrat depends upon the thinker. It is in its thinking capacity that the humanity of the West is hesitant and uncertain.

The religious tradition of these leading nations is that of Christianity. But their religion is now in open conflict with their science. Their scientific way of thinking, their glory and paramount achievement, was reached through rebellion against their religion, whose professors had mostly forgotten its real meaning. They tried to defend the ancient cosmogony of the Bible as if it had some kind of apodictic truth prior and *contradictory* to man's best intelligence. The easy victory of science over religion upon debating points was thus somewhat spurious, being chiefly based upon misunderstanding, and the scientific nations were left in a divided state of mind. They still half-believe their religion, and they only half-live their science. So, though they have conquered the rest of the world by their material prowess, they have not given it an integral idea. They are themselves uncertain. Science has not become an integral and living vision of life. Magnificent and impressive as it is, it remains a great bag of technical

tricks on the one hand and a maze of unrelated facts and theories upon the other.

Nevertheless, though Science is not wholly victorious, Religion is irreparably worsted. This is not due to the conclusion of the argument, but to the practical miracles of science, which have surpassed all the legends of the faith in wonder.

Religion has now no faith in its own power to work yet more impressive miracles. Its prestige could be restored if its work, either in social organization or the "spiritual healing" of sick individuals, showed unmistakable knowledge and efficiency. But in the latter sphere scientific psychologists are already surpassing its efforts, and in the former it is losing ground. Its own sectarianism increases. New cults are constantly springing up, and though each one is, in theory, a new unity of humanity, it is in practice a new division. Indeed, Science itself, for all its diversity of aims, is probably more universal, catholic and co-operative in spirit than any church or religion now extant.

We may expect that many religious minds will soon awaken to the reality of this situation and change their method of work. They will give up their dogmatic basis of teaching and begin to work for the real unity of Science. Science is already,

for its own purposes, evolving conceptions of higher and higher universality. But it fails to fuse all human knowledge into any full or coherent human vision, and will fail as long as thinkers of the type we call "religious" are excluded, or exclude themselves, from full co-operation in its labours.

And it is for Religion to capitulate. Religion stands for the whole, for the need of all men as one totality, and, since it has been manoeuvred into the false position of representing a sectional, and even reactionary, interest, the most graceful act Religion could perform, as well as the most salutary for mankind, would be to commit spiritual *hari-kari* upon the doorstep of Science. Nor would this be any sacrifice upon the part of those religious minds which truly care for the unity and co-operation of humanity and for the development of the whole world as its common realm. They will welcome the work of transforming Science into Religion, by explaining all sciences in terms of one another as various forms of the same fundamental experience of Man. What would Pan-science be but the totality of human revelation, and what is that totality but the truth which men have formerly called Divine?

We have seen that every real culture begins

from a conquest. But has not Science conquered? Have not Newton, Darwin, Boscović and Einstein and a host of others overcome the world's opposition to their discoveries? And have not their progeny of technicians, from James Watt to Edison, transformed the fabric of our life and revolutionized its customs, until Science stands *practically*, to this age, in the position which Religion held to ages past? Except, of course, that it makes a religion of details, with no power to fuse life into one cosmic vision and inspiration.

Only the death of what is now called Religion—its voluntary, unresentful passing-away—can bring about its resurrection into the highest rank of Science as a new conception of Science—as the catalytic and combining agent of all its separate researches. Religion must lose its life to find it.

It is likely, of course, that many scientists will resist the impending transformation of their labours with passion as vindictive as ever Religion opposed to Science. Science is a great thing, but all scientists are not great men. It suits some of them very well that their special domain of research should be kept separate from all others within boundaries as if it were a property. The idea of co-operation between all the spheres of knowledge is resented, as if it were a threat to their

departmental supremacy. Professors of physics and mechanics shun the vitalist concepts of the biologists, and both would often deny the very name of scientific to the most fruitful methods of the psychologists. Only a few, who are thinkers of the highest rank, even glimpse the possibility of a scientific conception which will lead to genuine and orderly improvement in human life as a whole.

Only these few are aware of the degraded and impotent position in which Science is placed by the civilization it has done most to create. For the prestige of Science looks great in the modern world, and we forget that it is only suffered to exist as the flattered menial of plutocracy. By the masses, scientists are certainly esteemed for the new toys they constantly provide, but Science itself is not revered as the highest consciousness of the race. Neither the masses nor the scientists conceive it as the power of man to create his own future.

Nor can Science be guided by such a conception until its workers are able to reason together for the good of man, and not only to think separately in pursuit of particular gains. We can already just conceive, perhaps, of the possibility of a medical science that would concentrate all

physical, biological and psychological knowledge in the service of human health, both social and individual. But this involves a similar co-ordination of other sciences in the human interest which would exact from scientists a new attitude to one another and to their common function.

At present they have no corporate control of the human situation which they, more than other men, are in a position to understand. Disorganized as they are, socially and intellectually, they can only disown responsibility for the results of their work. They sometimes justify their position by a theory that their sole function is to equip mankind with greater powers, entirely regardless of how those powers are to be used. It is a pretty theory, but too obviously designed to console scientists for their painful subordination to stronger social forces. Even when Frederick Soddy, the physicist, made his virile protest against the waste of scientific research for the manufacture of poisonous gases after the war he received no support worth mentioning from his scientific colleagues. Before any such action as his could succeed, before scientists will be able at all to rise to the height of their responsibilities, they will have to solve the problem of their own organization upon personal and human grounds. Until then they will continue to



poison the population or nourish it, to give it toys, or tools or booby-traps to suit the convenience of people whose greed for money is often the least crazy thing about them.

At the best, much of the immense technical intelligence of modern man is squandered in enterprises which had much better wait until more vital problems are solved. Hundreds of expert scientists, for instance, are set to improve apparatus for the mechanical reproduction of dramas before any new creative movement in drama has suggested the need for such expression. Nothing can liberate Science from its slavery to national, commercial and personal rivalries except the self-integration of scientists themselves into a corporate and conscious function of human life. It would take us far beyond the limits of this essay, and out of our present depth, to show how this depends partly upon the highest kind of intellectual work, but it will be necessary for all the sciences to be made interpretable to one another. This requires the service of thinkers who can show how the ultimate concepts upon which each development of Science has been founded are related in logical coherence, so that the scientific age can become conscious as the single movement or phase of human growth which, unconsciously, it is.

But much can be done towards this end, and towards realization of the true status of Science, by recognition of the order of rank among scientific workers. At present, not only the ignorant, but many who ought to know better, are content with a very generalized notion of Science in which the highest theoretical work of physicists and mathematicians is confused with the most obvious ingenuities of mechanics, until the whole resembles a mass-superstition far more than a system of knowledge. It is not so much the sciences that are hard to correlate and set in order. It is the scientists. It is the all-too-human exclusiveness, jealousy and narrow ambition of the specialized workers that prevents Science from reaching its apotheosis as the body of established truth by which mankind could and ought to live. And workers in the field of Science will not achieve a truly efficient division of labour nor the most profitable exchange of its fruits until they are inspired with a new faith in the goal of all their knowledge.

We must look to those men whose faith in science and general knowledge of its achievements are beyond question, whilst their vision remains human and whole. Few and far between as they are, it is time for them to seek each other out, and

#### ARISTOCRACY AND THE MEANING OF CLASS RULE

to inspire scientists as a body to take up their responsibility for the counsel and guidance of the race. For it is only in the name of Man and of Man's own highest knowledge that humanity will now be willing to co-operate in solving the problem which Science has already set by its practical unification of Man's world.

The new work to which Science will thus be called will be voluntary and supererogatory. None of it will be paid for in advance. It will be the duty and honour of scientists, as the knowing faculty of mankind, to pool their knowledge, to call congresses and to publish their conclusions to a world which does not know how to ask for them. In a word, they must take up their function of leadership with efficiency. Very great power is in their hands, for whatever manifesto a world-congress of scientists could agree to issue would command universal attention. Nor could its corporate opinion have any of the "inhuman" quality now associated with the findings of separate scientific movements. Until scientists are unified by a human hope and vision, no such congress will meet, or be able to agree. Its scope must include psychologists, who, as knowers of the human psyche and its fundamental motives, will link its labours with the arts and with culture generally.

#### SCIENCE AND AXIOCRACY

When human knowledge thus takes concrete form and expression through the organization of its knowers the foundation of Axiocracy will be laid. This achievement will be neither easy nor very rapid, for it involves the creation of conscious co-operation that will traverse many existing lines of sectional interest and prejudice. But as it proceeds it will be accompanied by the growth of an Aristocracy which will be neither intellectual nor scientific in any specific sense. It will be an order of men and women who devote themselves to the political and social movements of their time, to direct them in accordance with the needs of individual human nature and in the light of science. Their first task will be to secure loyalty of co-operation between themselves, and their second to extend it. The Axiocratic order of the future can only be founded upon the needs of the individual. This is proved by the very disease of individualism which is prevalent among us. Man can no longer instinctively feel himself to be part of his community, and we have thus lost the immemorial basis of our social education. We have no alternative but to train the individual to feel the community as his own self-fulfilment. He must be induced to work at the common task as his own creative expression. And in order to understand

what is possible and impossible in this direction we must avail ourselves of the revelation of the psychologists.

Modern psychology, both in its impartial researches and in its practical therapeutic work, has taught us that the conscious mind of modern man, which is highly developed, is in a state of critical disharmony with deeper layers of thinking and feeling which are termed "subliminal" or "unconscious." It is a common experience for an individual to embark upon a course of conscious action which he dislikes in these unconscious depths of his nature. And as a large number of our actions are more or less unconsciously performed and so under the control of the "unconscious" mind, it is not surprising that such an individual defeats his own declared aim. If he persists very obstinately in his mistaken line of action the rebellion of his unconsciousness may even take the form of physical disease.

It follows that there is something undependable and even treacherous in the nature of the modern individual, not only towards others, but even to himself—a consideration we cannot ignore in discussing the possibility of Aristocracy. For the essence of any aristocracy is fidelity both to its aim and to its members. And it would be useless to

expect loyalty of association between natures of a fundamental duplicity, who may take with the left hand as much as they give with the right, and who, even if they formally co-operate in a cause, will contrive to hinder it by forgetfulness, mistakes, illnesses or other unconscious phenomena at its moments of critical need. If this disease of modern man is as general as there is reason to fear it is, the association we propose must inevitably fail, unless by its very nature it eradicates the cause of conflict between the conscious and unconscious minds of each member.

This is only possible by one kind of co-operation—that which is undertaken explicitly for the self-realization of the individual. If our aristocratic brotherhoods are founded upon this aim, all unconscious resistance to their working, upon the part of individual members, ought to disappear. But, in fact, much unconscious resistance to whole-hearted co-operation would remain, owing to causes which are also well known to psychologists.

There is something unrealizable about the ambitions of most persons living in our civilization. They have compensated themselves for feelings of defeat and frustration in earlier life by imagining themselves to have certain extraordinary or unique potentialities. The idea of a co-opera-



tion for self-realization might appeal to them, but it would also awaken all their fears of failure, for now their fantasy of the future would be nearer to the test of actuality. Many persons, if challenged to reveal their highest hopes for themselves, even in order that they might be helped to realise them, would become reticent and awkward, even to the point of forgetting what they most desired.

No Aristocratic movement could be initiated by persons so doubtful of their own hopes. Its beginning therefore depends upon those who have enough faith in themselves to believe that, with the loyal co-operation of others, they can realise their ambitions. And if their hope is to initiate an Axiocratic form of society, their first work will be to train others, not so certain of themselves, until they are capable of equally whole-hearted co-operation.

We must expect, then, the formation of groups in every class of Society, whose members will aid and encourage each other to the utmost in the realization of every aim which appeals to their own imagination, and which at the same time is of mutual and social usefulness. We need not now enquire by what difficult experimentation, what repeated trial and error, these groups will learn to liberate the true will of modern men. If such groups

appear, at first suggestion, to be cradles too lowly for the birth of Aristocracy, it is only because the true nature of Aristocracy has been forgotten. It now carries certain rank suggestions of strong men, "cave men," men of Powerful Will, who are born to bludgeon, override and intimidate others. But such men, who certainly do exist and who have their social significance, do not create the aristocratic functions which they may adorn or disfigure. The organism of Society germinates in a way which is beyond their understanding. The growth of Society is by an idea which is able to mobilise the will and imagination of ordinary persons, even to normalise the abnormal, and to draw forth willing and original contribution from those who would otherwise have too little courage for life.

It is just such a mobilization of the social will of any individuals anywhere that will be the specific work of these group-formations. They will be nuclei of the new social order, and they will grow in size and number until they are capable of co-ordinating the functions of Society as a whole, in which they will find themselves organically imbedded.

We have already discussed the need of such a work for the organization of Science. The scientific groups, as they rise to the height of their mission, will provide the other orders of Society



with the knowledge they need, through the instrumentality of groups which are discharging a similar function elsewhere.

In the commercial world groups will be formed of persons engaged in the management of manufacture, transport and distribution. Their primary object will be the organization of all commercial faculties in purely human interests, and they will gradually establish a new co-operative commerce, in place of the general competition that prevails. As fast as they succeed certain intermediate councils will be formed, both scientific and commercial in membership, which will solve all the major problems of the economic life, with incalculable benefit not only to value and commercial justice, but to technical efficiency.

From this we may certainly prophesy the liberation of the abundant potentiality of wealth which is inherent in modern societies. The real desire of those who turn naturally to merchandise and production is unlimited generosity of maintenance. They would like to sustain the world by providing for it, and their ideal would be to see the whole population in plenty. It is because our mercantile members are deeply disorganized, and are working against, instead of with, each other that this virtue of generosity is forced into its negative phase of

expression, and appears as the *saving of expense*—but not, unfortunately, as the saving of real wealth. The saving tendency proceeds to such lengths in our commercial life that it defeats its own object, and issues in unemployment, restricted output and the actual sabotage of goods upon purely financial considerations. Only as the economic fraternity learns to liberate the essential motives of its members will it be able to rule the world as dispenser of its material wealth, without inhibiting the creative powers of other workers.

This reform of the commercial life will go far to solve the most menacing problem of the present world, which is the revolt of labour against capital. For its complete solution a similar work will be needed amongst the workers. The workers' groups will become the nuclei of a new working class, which will be able to realise the individual aspirations of its members for status, maintenance, and control of their work as well as an ample and well-filled leisure. Instead of being driven to destructive revolt they will then be able to lay hold upon their legitimate power.

The capitalistic order raised the workers by setting them in control over machinery. There was no longer any need of a labouring class, in the strict sense of the word. Mechanical energy was

supplied, and man no longer needed to use his own body as a mere engine. This change demanded the regrading of the workers as a class of a higher status, for the contribution now required of them was definitely less physical and more intellectual in kind. But the capitalist order rather degraded the workers, for it divorced them from the land and made them entirely dependent upon their hire. Moreover, whilst the theory of capitalism explicitly defined the reward due to the owner of property or capital, it was entirely non-committal as to the reward due to the wage-earner, and indefinite as to whether he should be employed at all. Revolt against so one-sided a system would have been inevitable, even if it had served the workers much better than it did: and there is little doubt that a workers' revolution would now occur in any industrialized country if its government were seriously weakened by war or any other great calamity.

The institution of Axiocratic groups of workers will finally remove this tension. They will overcome the spirit of slavishness and cowardice which the workers now share with all other classes, and enable them to lay irresistible claim to the status of economic equality with the managers and organizers of production. They will thus attain to

partnership and common responsibility with commerce, in maintaining the material fabric of Society. With a new power of mutual support, the workers will press towards this goal in an atmosphere which will be clearing up in other quarters also. Their dreams of revolutionary destruction will disappear, as they find themselves able to reorganise industry and finance in their own interest, in a world which will, at the same time, be changing to make way for the order which they create.

In one respect, and one only, this outline of the social future may be suspected as pure Utopianism. The developments of science, of commerce and of industry which have been here predicted are not in themselves impossibly idealistic; many who are actually engaged in these pursuits have seen such possibilities to be inherent in our present culture. But they depend, it must be admitted, upon one condition which has been assumed—that certain individuals will choose themselves to initiate such a social regeneration. And it may well be asked: "Who can—and who will—call these new groups into being?"

That question is unanswerable by its nature: it is necessary to beg it. We can give no reason

## ARISTOCRACY AND THE MEANING OF CLASS RULE

why anyone should assume, in addition to the responsibilities which ordinary life imposes, a task so difficult. But such movements of the human spirit have been known. In the society of man there seems to be an irrational force of growth, of creation, of life. Certain individuals appear, who seem able to divine new possibilities of life for all, and wish to fulfil themselves only by realising these possibilities. Those who do so are the real, and often hidden, aristocrats, and the only true lovers of human culture. The hope that Democracy will be saved, as it only can be saved, by development into an Axiocratic order, does presuppose belief that such spirits exist among us.

And truly to believe that such spirits exist is to enter into collaboration with them. By such an intuition or imagination or by both at once does a man take his part in the conquest of nature over nature, both in himself and in the world. That belief is itself a creative act. It is supra-rational: and such is the nature of Life.

# PURPOSE

QUARTERLY 6d.; YEARLY 2/- (POST PAID)  
EDITED BY W. T. SYMONS & PHILIPPE MAIRET

PURPOSE is a review of present-day things and thoughts.

It is highly tendencious, opiniated, idealistic and critical in several directions at the same time.

It is produced entirely by writers who are bursting to say what they think, and neither coaxed nor paid to say what they don't.

This Review is run "in the human interest." By this phrase the editors intend to convey that no interests—doctrinal, personal, national nor financial—are sacrosanct—a man's a Man for all that, and so is a woman.

PURPOSE discusses literature, drama and art, as well as politics and science, in the light of their own living intention, often with strange and surprising results.

The greatest mind among its contributors once described PURPOSE as a "dim and well-intentioned effort" to disclose the "humanness in all things human." If 'dim,' this is due to the vast area of life it seeks to illumine. If well-intentioned, it is only because so few nowadays seem to have any intentions at all.

PURPOSE does believe that Humanness is a deeper reality than even Relativity or Psychology. After all *it* invented *them*.

Relativity and Psychology: these conceptions are revolutionizing the consciousness of our age. But Einstein's work, or Freud's, can just as well be used to disintegrate, as to build up Man's estate.

This paper delights in new knowledge. It reverences the pioneer, and likes revolutionaries better than reactionaries. But still its fixed "complex" and its "frame of reference" is the human

# PURPOSE

London: The C. W. Daniel Company, 46, Bernard Street, W.C.1

# POLITICS

## A Discussion of Realities

Initiated by  
J. V. DELAHAYE

In Company with  
HILDERIC COUSENS    V. A. DEMANT  
PHILIPPE MAIRET    ALBERT NEWSOME  
ALAN PORTER    MAURICE B. RECKITT  
W. T. SYMONS

Paper covers, 3s. 6d. net;    Cloth bound, 5s. net

¶ The writers who have collaborated in this book are concerned not only to observe the impotence and cynicism of politicians and the political apathy of citizens, but to enquire into the causes, both personal and collective, and to suggest changes in the sphere of political and economic control, and in political and social institutions, with the object of redeeming the whole sphere of politics from indifference, and the citizen from that sense of powerlessness and despair of any real influence which are undermining the belief in democracy.

LONDON: THE C. W. DANIEL COMPANY  
Forty-six Bernard Street, W. C. 1